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ABSTRACT

This booklet is one of a series developed by the Northern Colorado Educational Board of Cooperative Services to make available to teachers ideas designed and tested by other teachers. Many of the ideas are from educational journals as well as from the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). The booklet is divided into seven sections: Introduction to Listening, Identifying and Discriminating Between Sounds, Developing an Awareness of the Speaker's Attitude, Recognizing Rhythm and Rhythmic Patterns, Listening for Specific Information, Listening for the Main Idea, and bibliography. Each section, except for the bibliography, contains from two to eight activities, with the purposes of the activities explained. (TS)

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LISTENING SKILLS:

Activity Ideas
for Grades 1, 2 and 3

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For
Northern Colorado Educational Board of
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TO THE TEACHER:

It's not easy to be a teacher, to make each day alive and stimulating. We at NCEBOCS want to make your job a little easier. We've talked with teachers and learned that you especially need good ideas for activities, activities that students will enjoy while they learn the skills they need.

Listening Skills: Activity Ideas for Grades 1, 2 and 3 is one of a series of booklets developed by NCEBOCS to make available to teachers ideas designed and tested by other teachers. We gather these ideas from educational journals as well as from the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), a nationwide system of educational information supported by the National Institute of Education (NIE).

The purpose of this idea book is to present you with activity ideas designed to improve students listening skills. Research has shown that listening can be taught, and that specific instruction in this frequently neglected area results in improved reading and language usage.

Children need to know why they are to listen, what they are to listen for, and how they are to listen.

The activities in this book are designed to enrich and supplement your existing curriculum program. We hope you will modify some, create extensions for others, and jot down your own. As the booklet changes and grows, so will its utility and effectiveness for you.

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INTRODUCTION TO LISTENING

PURPOSE: To understand the importance of listening.

ACTIVITY: Without giving any instructions for listening, take the children for a walk. When they have returned to the classroom, have them identify the various sounds they heard during the walk and list them on the chalkboard. Then discuss the nature and sources of the sounds around them. Does identification of the source of the sound have a significance?

Repeat the activity, preferably visiting various areas, so that the children will become increasingly aware of what they are listening to and will be able to identify certain areas by the sounds peculiar to the area. e.g., factory whistle, truck sounds, expressway traffic.

Enable the children to appreciate the importance of sounds to blind people who use their aural environment as a means of determining conditions and locations in order to move about safely without a companion.

PURPOSE: To understand the importance of giving full attention to the speaker.

ACTIVITY: Tell the students they are to be part of an experiment. Give each student a paper and ask them to make a list of as many animals as they can. While they are doing this, speak to them on some other subject. After a few minutes discuss the importance of giving full attention to the speaker.

PURPOSE: To understand that different people hear different things when they listen to a speaker.

ACTIVITY: Ask two children to leave the room for a few minutes. While they are absent, relate a story, an incident, a tall tale, or a joke to the rest of the class. Ask one of the children to return, and have a volunteer tell him the story in the full view and hearing of the class. Then ask the second child to re-enter the room, and have the first child tell him the story he just heard. Is the third rendition of the tale the same as the first? If not, how does it differ, and why? What does the activity tell about listening? Did everyone listen to the story? Does the speaker have anything to do with the listener? Repeat the activity from time to time in an effort to reduce the disparity. To sustain interest, limit each session to one story and increase its length and complexity as the children become skilled in the activity.

PURPOSE: To understand the importance of listening attentively.

ACTIVITY: Using toy telephones or a teletrainer which may be obtained from the telephone company, have the children conduct telephone conversations. Help them to understand that the telephone is an important instrument of communication which must be used responsibly. Help them also to understand that the listener in a telephone conversation, as in any other form of communication, must be attentive and respond courteously when response is expected.

PURPOSE: To understand the difference between hearing and listening.

ACTIVITY: Play a game called "Simon Says." The children stand in a circle, and the teacher or a classmate acts as the leader and gives directions to the group. The children follow all of the directions which are prefaced by the phrase "Simon Says," but are "out" if they follow directions which are not so prefaced. The last one to remain standing is the winner of the game, the champion listener for the day. Children should understand that whereas all heard the commands, only the attentive were listening.

PURPOSE: To identify standards for effective listening.

ACTIVITY: Early in the semester have the children compile a list of standards for good listening. After all of the standards have been discussed, make them the subject of a bulletin board display.

The list might include such items as:

1. Sit quietly and look at the speaker.
2. Listen to what he is saying.
3. Think about what he is saying.
4. Respond courteously when response is appropriate.

Include in the discussion, but not necessarily on the list, such related items as discussing a lesson or a program as an aid to memory, and the importance of practicing listening skills whenever possible in day-to-day behavior.

PURPOSE: To understand the importance of listening with a purpose.

ACTIVITY: Read to the children a list of numbers and then ask them to select a particular one and respond orally.

Examples:

7-1-4-9-5	What was the third number?
11-8-3-7-10	Which number was the largest?
8-5-2-6-9	Which number is closest to the sum of two plus two?

Lead the children to understand that they must listen purposefully and selectively. Give the directions only once, and only after the series of numbers has been given. Items other than numbers can be used in this activity. For example, the children might be given a list or a sentence and asked to listen for the action words, or the names of countries or of cities, or the words which begin with a certain letter. Give only enough exercises for the child to see that it is difficult to select the correct answer when he doesn't know what he is to listen for. Then, repeat the activity, this time telling the children what they are to do before they hear the series or the sentence. Give enough exercises for the child to see that he is now able to select the correct answer nearly every time. Discuss with the children the reasons why they were more successful during the second part of the activity than they were during the first, eliciting from them the conclusion that when one knows in advance what he is to listen for, he usually listens more effectively.

PURPOSE: To understand the importance of listening with a purpose.

ACTIVITY: Invite to class (or to a small assembly program) a community helper, such as a fireman, a policeman, a merchant, or the local postmaster. Before the program, discuss with the children the kinds of information they might secure from their guest's presentation. Following the program, invite the children to share verbally with the class the elements and techniques which helped them to remember what was said. Give special recognition to any recollections not anticipated and identified by the class prior to the guest speaker's talk.

IDENTIFYING AND DISCRIMINATING

BETWEEN SOUNDS

PURPOSE: To identify and discriminate between sounds.

ACTIVITY: Ask pupils to close their eyes and listen, raising a hand when they hear a sound for which they can recognize a source. One pupil may report that the first grade is playing on the school grounds. Ask him how he guessed it was the first grade. Is the teacher there? Are there other children? What are they playing? Are all first graders playing together? Ask another pupil simply to describe the noise he heard. He might attempt to describe the sound of a truck pulling up a hill from a stop at the service station. If descriptive terms are difficult to find, the class should help him. Other sounds can be described and inferences drawn: footsteps in the hall recognized as the custodian by the sound of his cart accompanying the footsteps; the telephone ringing down the hall--the only bell of the sort in the building; the sound of a hammer some distance away.

PURPOSE: To identify and discriminate between sounds.

ACTIVITY: Take the class on a field trip to a farm or zoo or bring animals such as kittens, puppies, chickens, parakeets, or crickets into the classroom, and direct the children to listen to the sounds they make. Then play a record or a tape recording of animal and bird sounds and have the children identify them. Large pictures of the various animals and birds should accompany the tape or record.

PURPOSE: To identify and discriminate between sounds.

ACTIVITY: Read a story to the class and choose particular children to produce appropriate sound effects (sirens, automobile horns, train and boat whistles) to underscore the story line. This activity may be repeated from time to time until all the children have participated.

PURPOSE: To identify and discriminate between sounds.

ACTIVITY: Play "Sound Detectives." Choose one child to be leader and another who is blindfolded to be the "sound detective." The leader points to a member of the class who asks in a normal voice, "What is my name?". If the blindfolded child makes the proper identification, the person identified becomes the new "sound detective."

PURPOSE: To identify and discriminate between sounds.

ACTIVITY: In conjunction with a music lesson, play records or tapes of musical selections involving different instruments. Ask children to differentiate between sounds of the individual instruments. If possible, instruments of the various sections of the orchestra may be brought into the classroom and demonstrated.

PURPOSE: To identify and discriminate between sounds.

ACTIVITY: Listen to the names of children in the room. Which begin alike? Pronounce the initial sound of each child's name and have the child stand and complete his own name and the name of another child which begins in the same way.

PURPOSE: To identify and discriminate between sounds.

ACTIVITY: Construct games which involve practice in the use of consonants such as "I am thinking of a word that begins with (p), and is the name of a flower." (peony, petunia).

PURPOSE: To identify and discriminate between sounds.

ACTIVITY: Divide the class into two sections and tell a story or say aloud a series of words containing phonemes which they are to differentiate, such as the following:

/p/ - /b/
/t/ - /d/
/f/ - /v/
/k/ - /g/
/s/ - /z/
/ch/ - /j/
/th/ as in thin
/TH/ as in then

Have one side listen for one of the two phonemes and the other side listen for the other. Each side gains or loses a point when it identifies or fails to identify a word which the other side has missed.

pit - bit
pace - base
pie - buy

tot - dot
tip - dip
tense - dense

fat - vat
fine - vine
few - view

thin - this
theme - them
thesis - these

kate - gate
kill - gill
(k) came - game

sip - zip
sing - zing
sue - zoo

char - jar
cheer - jeer
choke - joke

DEVELOPING AN AWARENESS OF THE SPEAKERS ATTITUDE

PURPOSE: To develop an awareness of the speaker's attitude.

ACTIVITY: Recite the same word or sentence in a series of different ways so that the children are able to see that one can sometimes interpret the attitude of a speaker by listening not only to what he says, but also to how he says it. For example, say the word "Mary" gently but sternly, angrily, laughingly, excitedly, with disappointment or with exasperation; or recite the sentence, "Johnny has a pet monkey." as a statement of fact with happy excitement, with disbelief, with disgust or annoyance, or in a malicious, tattle-tale manner. Help the children to listen carefully during the day for words or sentences which impress them pleasantly or unpleasantly because of what was said or how it was said. At the end of the day, have the children report what they heard, what effect it had on them, and why it had that effect.

PURPOSE: To practice communicating different attitudes.

ACTIVITY: Have the pupils read aloud sentences and indicate various emotions through changes in voice inflection.

For example: "Who are you?" to show puzzlement, fear, anger, indifference.

Discuss with them the vocal changes which convey this feeling.

For example: "Anger is usually indicated by a fast rate, loud voice, and medium or flat inflection."

PURPOSE: To develop an awareness of the speakers attitude.

ACTIVITY: Have one of the children describe his favorite possession or his most interesting experience, or what he would like most to have or to do. If he prefers to do so, allow the child to describe an object he dislikes or an experience he would like to avoid. Then discuss with the children the speaker's attitudes as he revealed them in his description. Try to elicit from them the means through which they recognize that attitude by asking such questions as:

What did Johnny like (or dislike) about _____?
What were some of the words he used to describe it which showed that he liked (or disliked) it?
How did he sound when he was describing it? Did he sound happy, excited, embarassed or angry?
How do you know?

RECOGNIZING RHYTHMS AND RHYTHMIC PATTERNS

PURPOSE: To recognize rhythm and rhythmic patterns.

ACTIVITY: Ask the children to respond to rhythm in music. They may tap their feet, tap the desk with their fingers, or clap their hands. Then tap a rhythmic pattern on a band instrument or on a desk and ask the children to repeat it. Maintaining a game-like atmosphere, vary the pattern and increase its complexity.

PURPOSE: To recognize rhythm and rhythmic patterns.

ACTIVITY: Introduce the children to rhythm in non-musical areas: clocks ticking, the swinging of a pendulum, the sound when walking, the sound of a shade flapping in the breeze. Through discussion of these examples, lead them to understand that regularity of occurrence in a given time span determines rhythm. Let them find examples of rhythmical and non-rhythmical occurrences in the classroom.

LISTENING FOR

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

PURPOSE: To listen for specific information.

ACTIVITY: Read the description of a scene to pupils. Encourage them to draw pictures from what they have heard.

PURPOSE: To listen for specific information.

ACTIVITY: Dramatize the action suggested by a paragraph. Read a short paragraph aloud. Read the following and direct children to listen carefully and then pretend to be the animal described:
A lion paced slowly back and forth in its cage. Suddenly he stopped stock-still and listened. Then he sniffed the air. Then he gave a low growl and lay down on the floor of his cage.

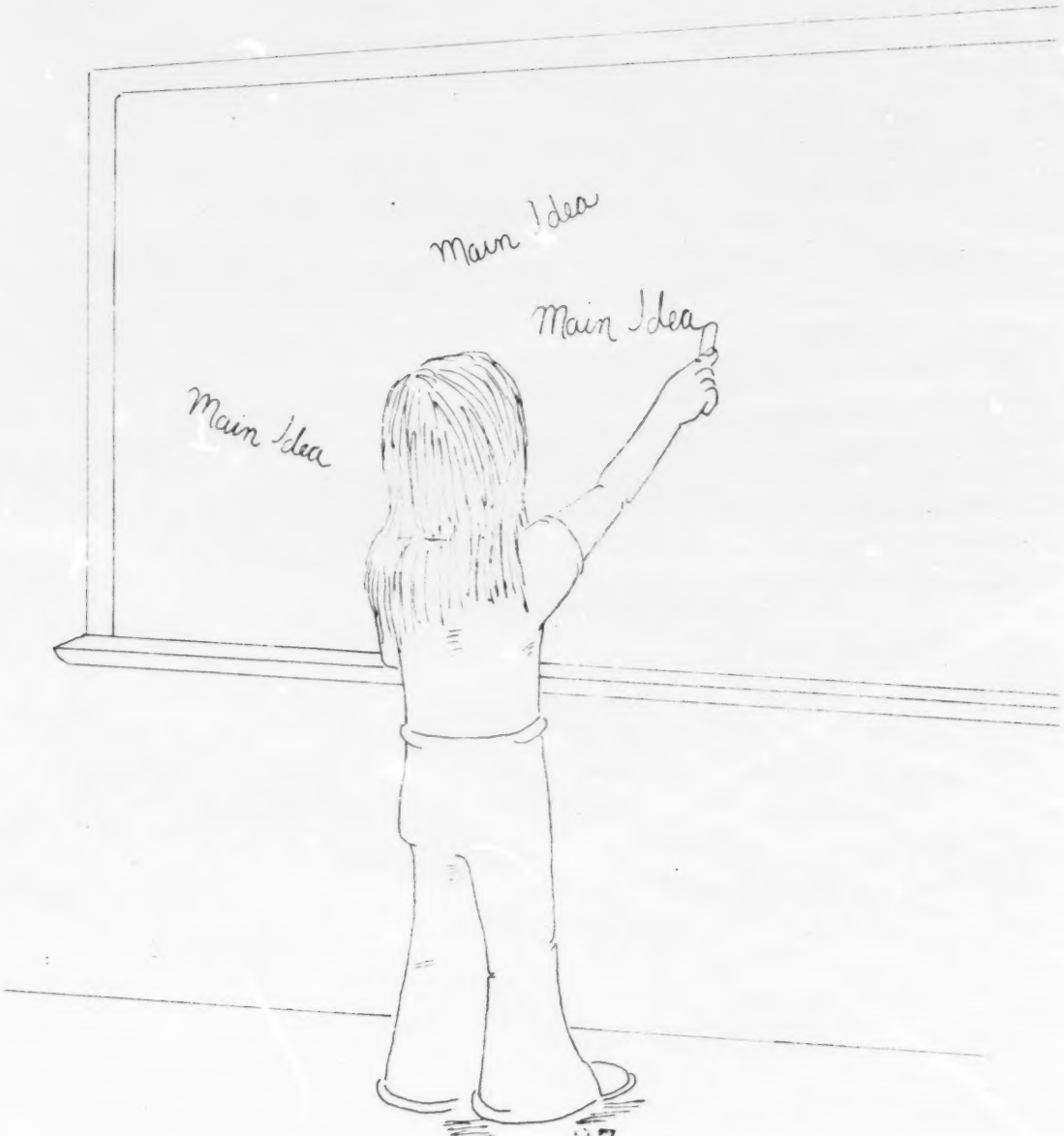
PURPOSE: To listen for specific information.

ACTIVITY: Ask one child to describe something which he holds in his hand or which he sees in the room as the other children close their eyes and listen for details in an effort to guess what it is. In the event that no one can identify the object after the speaker has exhausted his verbal descriptions, invite the listeners to ask questions which can be answered "Yes" or "No". The child who first correctly identifies the concealed object wins the opportunity to replace the speaker.

PURPOSE: To listen for specific information.

ACTIVITY: Give the class simple directions for activities which involve three things to do. For example: Clap your hands twice, hop twice, and jump twice. While one child is performing, have the others check his performance against the given directions. Repeat the activity, having some of the more successful children execute the directions in reverse.

LISTENING FOR THE MAIN IDEA



PURPOSE: To listen for the main idea.

ACTIVITY: Play a record or a tape which tells a story. After the children have listened to the entire story, allow time for discussion and then ask them to tell in as few words as possible what the story was about. Lead them to state the main idea of the story.

PURPOSE: To listen for the main idea.

ACTIVITY: Invite a community helper, or the school secretary or custodian, into the class to tell the children about his or her job. In the discussion that follows the visit, help the children to determine what this person's job is. Have them draw a picture of this person at work and make up titles for the pictures.

PURPOSE: To listen for the main idea.

ACTIVITY: Read to the class some short poems, then encourage the children to suggest titles for each selection that are appropriate to the main idea of the poem. List the suggestions on the board as they are given. Evaluate each title as it is suggested. If there is a difference of opinion among the children, ask the children to support their choice by citing references to the content of the poem. Allow the class to make a decision. When only the most appropriate titles remain and a decision has been made, reveal the real title of the poem to the class and compare it to the one they chose.

PURPOSE: To listen for the main idea.

ACTIVITY: Read aloud a paragraph in which there is one sentence which is unrelated to the others. Have the children discover the unrelated sentence and have them give reasons for their choice and/or substitute a sentence which is related to the main idea.

Bibliography of ERIC Documents

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* We would strongly recommend that teachers interested in listening skills obtain these documents from the ERIC system. These were our most valuable sources in the development of this idea book.